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Umno-Mahathir

MAHATHIR AND ANWAR WILLING TO CONTEST IN NEXT UMNO ELECTION

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim are willing to have a contest for their posts in the 1999 Umno elections provided the contest is clean.

The no-contest decision for the president and deputy president's posts for the current term would not be institutionalised, Dr Mahathir said at a news conference at the end of the second day of the Umno General Assembly here today. Anwar was also present.

"We are willing to contest provided it is clean, but some people will dirty the contest," Dr Mahathir said.

The decision not to have a contest for the two top posts in the party this year was made by the 1995 Umno General Assembly.

"No, not necessary to institutionalise the no-contest," he said in reply to a question whether Umno might impose a similar no-contest for the next triennial party elections.

Dr Mahathir also rejected a suggestion that some of the newly-elected office bearers were proxies of certain quarters who have their own agenda in the party.

He said: "I don't know. Proxy to whom?"

"I do not like to have any suspicion until I have the proof, as suspicion can destroy a good relationship."

On whether some of the candidates who lost in yesterday's Supreme Council election were rejected by delegates because of their involvement in money politics, the Prime Minister said: "I don't know. Only the delegates themselves really know."

He said he had to rely on the delegates as they were the ones who were offered the bribes.

"We (the party's special committee on the election chaired by him) received many reports but some people are not honest. That's why I have to rely on other sources to confirm them."

To a question whether the money could have come from multinational companies or foreign sources, he said he did not know where it came from.

He said somebody who did not have the money but was willing to spend generously obviously obtained the money from somewhere.

"In my view, if you receive money from somebody it must be some kind of corruption," he said.

When asked why not a single corporate figure was elected to the Supreme Council, Dr Mahathir said he was not aware and added that he never said that they should be rejected.

"We do not know why the corporate figures were not elected but what is important is whether anyone tried to use forbidden means."

Asked whether there was any bitterness among the losers, Dr Mahathir said: "There was a little bit of bitterness here and there, but I really feel Umno will close ranks after this."

To a question whether he could stamp out political corruption in Umno, he said it was important to inculcate noble values in members to enable them to reject bribes.

He said the country has laws providing for hanging for dadah trafficking and yet there are still people bold enough to traffick dadah, what more if it is an offence involving money politics which is not punishable with death.

Asked why he cried when he spoke of political corruption endangering Umno in his presidential speech to the General Assembly yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he was not aware that he shed tears. -- BERNAMA

SJA ARA CTL